

KIDS HEALTH

January 2025 Newsletter

Zone

Skin Infections Common in Athletics

Skin infections account for up to 10% of time-loss injuries in some sports, can be spread from one athlete to another, and can cause serious illness. Athletic participation, primarily in close-contact sports (such as football, basketball, and wrestling) can expose athletes to infectious pathogens. In sports, numerous viral, bacterial, and fungal infections may spread through direct skin-to-skin contact. Damaged skin (eczema, contusions, abrasions, and lacerations) may increase risk of transmission.

Look for
signs of
skin
infections

-Pus
-Redness
-Swelling
-Warmth
-Pain at
site

MRSA (Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*) is a bacteria that typically causes skin infection (boils and cellulitis) but can also cause more serious infections. It is resistant to antibiotics used to treat skin infections. **Spreads by direct contact with lesions or common objects and surfaces, including shared sports equipment, towels, razors, skin-to-skin contact.**

- Typically: one or more painful sores, with pus surrounded by redness, sometimes associated with fever.

MRSA (Staphylococcus-resistant aureus) "Staph"



A skin infection, primarily seen among wrestlers, is caused by Herpes Simplex **virus** type 1 (HSV-1). **The spreading of this virus is strictly skin-to-skin.**

- Typically: Before skin lesions appear, some people may have a sore throat, swollen lymph nodes, fever or tingling on the skin. Usually appear as a cluster of fluid filled blisters and may be on the face, extremities or trunk. Seek medical care immediately for lesions in or around the eye.

Herpes gladiatorum



Athletes in all sports can experience infections, but the highest rates are reported in wrestling, football, and rugby.

The three most common skin infections in athletes

Other Skin Infections in Athletes

- Hand, Foot, Mouth Disease
- Impetigo (Group A Strep)
- Herpes Simplex (cold sore)
- Scabies



A common **fungal** infection of hair, skin, or nails.

- Typically: itchy, dry, red, ring-shaped rashes that can have a clear or scaly area inside the ring, scattered bumps inside the ring that appear red on white skin, or appear red-purple, brown, gray, or black on brown skin. It may be slightly raised or have overlapping rings.

Tinea
(dermatophytosis)
"Ringworm"



Risk factors:

- **Skin-to-skin contact**
- **Wrestling and football** are the sports with the greatest number of outbreaks.
- **Outbreaks have been reported among participants in many other sports.**



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QUICK LINKS

- [Resources | MRSA | CDC](#)
- [Athletic Facilities: MRSA Prevention and Control | MRSA | CDC](#)
- [Prevention of Infectious Diseases in Athletes – PMC](#)
- <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/herpes/glad.html>
- [Communication and Educational Materials | Fungal Diseases | CDC](#)
- [Skin Infections in Athletes Print Materials - MN Dept. of Health](#)
- [Communicable Skin Infections Course](#)
- [Sports Related Skin Infections Position Statement and Guidelines](#)
- [GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR SPORTS HYGIENE, SKIN INFECTIONS, AND COMMUNICABLE DISEASES](#)

MRSA can survive on a surface for prolonged periods of time. A 2012 prevalence study of rural high schools in Ohio detected presence of MRSA on 89% of wrestling mats and 78% of locker room benches.

[Practices and Procedures to Prevent the Transmission of Skin and Soft Tissue Infections in High School Athletes - PMC](#)



Athletes Preventive Approach can help athletes avoid becoming sick or losing playing time due to skin infections.

- Avoid sharing used items such as water bottles, bar soaps, razors, deodorant, or other personal supplies.
- Report any skin problems to your athletic trainer, school nurse, coach, or health care provider.
- Tell your health care provider you participate in competitive sports.
- Follow your health care providers instructions for treating and caring for lesions or open sores!

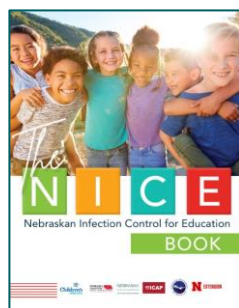
Coaches, administrators, school nurses, and athletic trainers all play an important role in keeping the environment safe for all student athletes.

- Use gloves when caring for broken skin or possible infections.
- Perform hand hygiene before and after contact with athletes.
- Exclude athletes from activities if wounds cannot be covered or if the activity poses a risk to their health or the health of others.

Prevent skin infections:



[Nebraskan Infection Control for Education Book - ICAP \(nebraskamed.com\)](#)



Ringworm: (pages 140-141)
MRSA: (pages 130-133)

Athletic Facilities Prevention and Control Guidance

Cleaning and Disinfection

- Keep facilities and shared equipment clean by following the manufacturer's instructions and referring to your facility policies and guidelines.
- Use a school EPA-approved disinfectant.
- Clean shared equipment after each use and allow to dry before use.
- Repair or dispose of equipment and furniture with damaged surfaces.
- Focus on surfaces that come into direct contact with individuals' skin (i.e., mats). [Wrestling Mat Safety - National Wrestling Coaches Association](#)

